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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love You, save souls

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

Volume 5 - THE CHRISTIAN'S LAST END

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

The Terrible Signs That Are to Precede the Last Day of General Judgment

"There shall be signs." Luke 21:25.

All Catholic Christians believe that in his second advent Jesus Christ shall come as the Judge of the living and the dead, but no man knows the day of his coming. Yet the world shall be able to learn that the day of judgment is at hand from the signs that Christ himself has announced as forerunners of the last day. There shall be terrible signs in the heavens and in all the elements.

I. *These signs and their causes I shall explain, and prove that*

II. *These signs shall be to the wicked a source of fear and anguish, but to the good a source of joy and exultation.*

When the three and a half years of the reign of Antichrist shall have expired, then, says our Lord, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved" (Matt. 24:29). All the elements shall be disturbed; the air shall resound with fearful storms and thunder; the sea and all waters shall be disturbed by mighty waves rising and falling; the earth shall be shaken and almost riven asunder by earthquakes that shall swallow whole cities, while fire shall burst forth with a great roar from the mountains and caverns. In a word, the wheels of the vast clock of the world shall be all broken and disordered, as a sign that the last hour of judgment is at hand, and such shall be the fear, anguish, and faint-heartedness of men and the howling and roaring of beasts that no one will know where to turn or what to do.

Why that great disturbance and consternation of all creatures? First, it is a sign of compassion, and, as it were, a fainting and death-agony of all nature at the destruction of the world. When the head of a household is at the point of death the whole family is disturbed and bewildered; the wife weeps and tears her hair in an agony of grief; the children give vent to their sorrow in noisy cries; the relatives weep; the servants run hither and thither, sighing and moaning; the death-knell tolls its sorrowful note from the church-tower; friends and neighbors clad in mourning come to the funeral. All is grief and lamentation. So shall it be when the end of the world approaches, and the human race, the head of this household of the world, is at the last gasp; all nature shall be stricken with fear and consternation; the sky shall lose its luminaries and put on the sable garb of night; the

elements shall, as it were, weep, and become quite bewildered, while the atmosphere, resounding with thunder and violent hurricanes, shall be, so to speak, the death-knell of the dying world.

Moreover, these signs shall show forth the great anger and displeasure of the Almighty at sinful men. The heavens now announce the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands (Ps. 18:2). But then they shall declare the anger of God against the wicked. For the stars of heaven and their brightness shall not display their light: the sun shall be darkened in his rising, and the moon shall not shine with her light. And what then? “And I will visit the evils of the world, and I will make the pride of infidels to cease, and will bring down the arrogance of the mighty” (Is. 13:9-11). Sun, moon and stars groan and complain at having to give their light to men to be misused in offending and insulting God; the earth, fire, water, air, beg, as it were, the Almighty to free them from the servitude in which they are to sinners.

At the end of the world all creatures shall be set at liberty and released from slavery, and like a mighty army they will all rush in a body against the wicked to put them to shame. The sun will declare war; the moon, colored like blood, and the stars, disturbed out of their course, shall begin the battle. We, they will say, have given our fair light for such a long time to sinners who were unworthy of it; we have marked for them the hours, days, weeks, months and years; we have by our regularity in our motions set them a good example of the obedience they owe to God; but they preferred to follow the suggestions of the devil, the appetites of the flesh, the customs and maxims of the perverse world, instead of obeying the law of their Creator; therefore our period of service is at an end for them, and we shall be to them henceforth only a source of fear and consternation.

The four elements shall take the field against sinners. The air that gave them breath and voice, so that they could breathe and speak; from which they received the fruitful rain; in which the birds dwelt, to their delight and nourishment—the air will attack them on all sides; it will throw down buildings by the violence of opposing winds; it will tear up trees by the roots; send down hailstones to strike the beasts of the field dead, and with thunder and fierce lightings and terrible apparitions that shall be seen in the air, it will fill every one with dismay.

The water that supplied sinners with drink and with fish for their food, and that carried them from one country to another in the pursuit of their business, will then overstep its boundaries and inundate the adjoining land far and wide; it will rage and foam against the godless, ready to swallow them up as it did Jonas. Be ashamed, oh, Christian! the sea shall cry out with its rushing waves; be ashamed that I, who have no understanding like you, have been for six thousand years obedient to my Creator, and have not gone as much as the breadth of a grain of sand beyond the limits he marked out for me, but have always kept within bounds; while you, on the contrary, endowed with reason and countless benefits, allured by the hope of heaven, terrified by the fear of hell, have yet often and deliberately transgressed the commands of God and wallowed in a very sea of vice!

The earth, which has hitherto served even the wicked for their nourishment, clothing, dwelling-place, and pleasure, supplying them with everything in such plenty, the earth will then open with continual quakings, and, as it were, cry out for vengeance against the sinner for having so wantonly and ungratefully misused its gifts. The wild beasts will come forth out of their caves and dens with horrible howlings, and follow up the sinner everywhere, filling him with terror. Where will sinners creep in order to hide themselves, or to find comfort and consolation, when heaven and earth are in such disorder and are uniting their forces to attack them? Our Lord has already told us how men shall feel on that day: “Men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world” (Luke 21:26).

The wicked shall indeed wither away with fear and dismay, and seek to hide themselves under the earth; they will howl and moan and lament. We must surrender; there is an end to all the pleasures and delights we enjoyed on earth; we must leave our wealth behind us; the last day is at hand; in a short time the terrible trumpet shall sound in our ears the words: arise, ye dead, and come to judgment! Soon shall we appear before our angry Judge, whom we have despised and made our enemy by our sins! Soon shall we hear the awful words: “Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire” (Matt. 25:41).

But what shall be the feelings of the just servants of God? How will it be with them? Hear what Christ says to them, after having spoken of the terrible forerunners of the last day: “But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift your heads: because your redemption is at hand” (Luke 21:28). To go with downcast head is a sign of sorrow and fear, and, my dear children, that is not for you, but for the wicked who refused to love and honor me. Let them wither away for fear, because they have no part in my eternal kingdom; but you, just

souls, who have kept my law and in all things tried to do my will, “look up and lift your heads;” rejoice and be glad! Why? “Because your redemption is at hand!” This is the time for which you have been sighing so long; the time for your release from captivity, from all dangers and troubles; the time for you to enter into the eternal repose of the children of God. This is the time when I shall make known to the world your humility and other virtues, which men knew nothing of, and vain worldlings despised you for! Rejoice! your redemption is at hand; the kingdom of heaven will soon be opened to you. Come, ye blessed! possess the kingdom that my Father and yourselves have prepared for you! Come with me into everlasting joys!

“See the fig-tree, and all the trees,” continues our Lord; “when they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh. So you also, when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand” (Luke 29:30, 31). His meaning is, in winter-time the trees are bare, without leaves or fruit, and covered with snow as with a mourning garment; but when the pleasant springtime comes, what a change takes place in them! They are adorned with the fresh buds, with green leaves and fruit, and the birds sing joyous melodies in their branches. So it is also with you, my faithful servants. Hitherto you have had the cold winter-time; you were hated and despised by the world, which you disregarded for my sake; you have often had to groan under the pressure of adversity, but now, when you shall see those signs of the spring and eternal summer, “look up and lift your heads: because your redemption is at hand.” You shall be crowned with a crown of everlasting joys.

It was this thought that brought such consolation of spirit to St. Paul in his manifold trials and persecutions, as he writes to his disciple Timothy: “The time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith.” I have been true to my God, and now what have I to expect from him? “As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day: and not only to me, but to them also that love his coming” (2 Tim. 4:6-8). It is for that we should long unceasingly, as our Lord himself has taught us to pray daily:

“Our Father, who art in heaven; thy kingdom come!”

What should be our thoughts on this subject? If these awful portents were visible in the heavens this very day to announce to us the end of the world, should we all have occasion to lift our heads and to await the coming of our Judge with joy and exultation? Would you, oh, ambitious man, rejoice, who now value the esteem of men more than the grace and favor of your God? Would you rejoice, oh, avaricious man, whose greatest and only care every day of your life is to amass wealth in every possible way? Would you rejoice, oh, unchaste man, who have hitherto indulged your foul passions, and by your wicked importunities have seduced many an innocent soul; who still continue to live in unlawful intimacy with one who has captivated your heart in the meshes of impure love? Would you rejoice, oh, vindictive man, who still nourish anger against your neighbor, and indulge in dreams of revenge? Would you rejoice, oh, drunkard, who on every occasion that offers itself rob yourself of your reason, and ruin yourself and those belonging to you? Would you rejoice, oh, vain child of the world, who are still so much attached to the world and know no law but its false maxims, leading meanwhile an idle, tepid life? In a word, all of you who have a mortal sin on your consciences, would you exult at the coming of your Judge? Alas! it is easy to speak to you of joy! Fear, anguish, terror, withering away for fear; such are rather the sad effects that those signs will have on you. Ah, why, then, do we not fear to offend God? How can we dare to spend even one hour in the state of mortal sin? For if death were to surprise us then, we should have nothing to expect but judgment without mercy and a hell without end.

Pious souls who have a good conscience! for you is the joy, the exulting hope! Only continue to serve your God with fidelity and zeal! “We should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Afflicted Christians, who have to suffer all kinds of trials and contradictions, what are you to think? Your sorrows, no matter how great they may be, that now afflict you, if you only bear them with a good conscience and resignation to the divine will, are for you infallible signs of future glory in heaven. To comfort yourselves, then, and alleviate your sorrow, say to yourselves: What I am now suffering shall come to an end; it will not last long; every day brings me nearer to my release. If I am poor and destitute for a short time, this very poverty is a sure sign of future riches in heaven. If I am despised, persecuted by the world, and abandoned by men, this humiliation is a sign of my approaching glory and honor in the society of the elect in heaven. If I now suffer injury and loss in my worldly goods, this loss is a sign of my future gain, of a treasure that awaits me in heaven. If I now weep with sorrow and trouble, it

is a sign of my future joy in heaven. If I am now sickly and weak, it is a sign of future eternal well-being in heaven. If I am now obliged to work hard every day in order to support myself and those depending on me, it is a sign and forerunner of future eternal repose in the kingdom of heaven. Therefore I will resign myself to God's will and providence: with the help of his grace I will suffer as long, how, and whatever he may will me to suffer! No matter how great my troubles may be, they shall not be equal to the joys of heaven. "Looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." With this consolation I will rejoice in all my trials, and say with Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth...and in my flesh I shall see my God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold: this hope is laid up in my bosom" (Job 19:25-27). This one hope is comfort enough for me. Amen.

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